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ABSTRACT

Significant support by 650 randomly selected high school students and graduates was found for educational innovations suggested by J. Lloyd Trump, Associate Secretary of the National Association of Secondary School Principals. A questionnaire, constructed and validated by the author to study the relationship between the students' ideas and Trump's, is appended. The students' responses were analyzed with attention to sex, cultural, and age differences. (See TM 000 786 for questionnaire.) (MS)

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STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF SELECTED INNOVATIONS IN SECONDARY EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

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By Deborah K. Osen, Ph.D.

The problem. The purposes of the study were to (1) construct and validate survey instruments to measure the perceptions high school students and graduates have of certain innovations in secondary education, and (2) indicate the relationships which exist between what high school students and graduates perceive to be a relevant secondary school education and what J. Lloyd Trump, Associate Secretary of the National Association of Secondary School Principals and a recognized expert in secondary education, recommends in the NASSP Model Schools Project as needed improvements in education at the secondary level.

Procedures. This educational investigation was conducted with 650 randomly selected high school students and graduates from three four-year high schools in the Southern California area, whose populations differed with regard to proportions of culturally different students, size, and results on the state educational tests.

Findings. The major research hypothesis investigated in the study was supported at the .01 level of significance, which indicated significant support by high school students and graduates for those innovations suggested by J. Lloyd Trump for inclusion in this study. All four related questions were answered in the affirmative since a highly significant difference (.001 level) was found between the students' responses and the four variables: sex, grade, ability, and school attended.

This study focused on the relationship between what high school students and graduates perceive to be a relevant secondary school education and what J. Lloyd Trump, Associate Secretary of the National Association of Secondary School Principals and an expert in secondary education, recommends as needed improvements in education at the secondary level. To study this relationship a questionnaire was constructed and validated. It offered an opportunity to investigate the degree of support by high school students and graduates of the major factors in the Model Schools Project, a comprehensive approach to educational improvement recommended by J. Lloyd Trump, and funded by the Danforth Foundation.

This educational investigation was conducted with three samples of randomly selected high school students and graduates from three four-year high schools in the Southern California area, whose populations differed with regard to proportions of culturally different students, size, and results on the state educational tests. Two of the samples were drawn from the two high schools in the Placentia Unified School District, while the third was selected from East Bakersfield High School in Bakersfield. In all, 650 high school students and graduates responded to a request to participate in the study by completing a questionnaire which asked for their perceptions of specific innovations in secondary education. Items in the questionnaire developed for use in the study were based on those aspects of the model of the NASSP Model Schools Project which most directly affected students,

(Trump and Georgiades, 1970) The final 49 item questionnaire demonstrated a reliability above .70 and content validity. The questionnaire was administered in a large group to students selected to participate from each school, and was self-admimistered by graduates who participated in the study. Responses were framed in the Likert scale format, given a numerical weighting according to the degree of support, and were machine scored. Chi-square tests were calculated by computer to test the research hypothesis and related questions.

Hypothesis and Related Questions

In Table 1 the findings on the degree of support are presented for all high school students and graduates participating in the study in relation to the educational innovations described in the questionnaire. The major research hypothesis, "That high school students and graduates will perceive as favorable the innovations in secondary school education as outlined by J. Lloyd Trump for the Model Schools Project, sponsored by the National Association for Secondary School Principals (1969)," was accepted at the .01 ,evel of significance. Statistical analysis of the data revealed that there was a very significant difference between the number of subjects in this study who indicated support for the Trump recommendations and those who did not: nearly 2/3 of all those participating in the study indicated agreement or strong agreement with the innovations contained in the survey. These findings revealed the existence of general support by students and graduates for the goals envisioned in the Model Schools Project, which Trump stated is essential to the successful incorporation into the total school program of the basic com-

prehensive changes suggested by the Model. (Trump, 1969; Trump and Georgiades, 1970; Georgiades and Trump, 1970)

TABLE 1

COMPARISON OF FREQUENCIES OF TOTAL STUDENTS RESPONDING FAVORABLY TO THE TRUMP PLAN WITH THOSE RESPONDING DIFFERENTLY

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
A + B	20,065	63%
C + D + E + No Response	11,785	37%
	31,850	100%

Chi-Square = 9.103

df = 1 p .01

The first question related to the hypothesis stated "Will girls have a more favorable perception of the recommended innovations than boys?" A Chi-square value of 91.556, found to be statistically significant at the .001 level of significance, indicated that female respondents expressed a stronger degree of support for the educational innovations included in the study than did males.

The second question of this study asked "Will seniors and graduates more favorably perceive the innovations than freshmen and sophomores in high school?" The Chi-square value of 561.236, highly significant statistically (.001 level of significance), indicated that seniors and graduates did express stronger support for the Trump plan than did the lower classmen.

The third question considered in this study was "Will students of above average intellectual ability indicate a more positive reaction to the innovations than below average students?" The Chi-square value of 200.851 was found to be at the .001 level of significance, which supported an affirmative response to Question 3.

The fourth question examined in this study asked "Will the school with the least number of culturally different students report a more favorable response to the innovations than the high school with the most culturally different students?" The Chi-square value of 205.496 was statistically highly significant (.001 level) and suggests that respondents at the school with the least culturally different students generally have a more positive attitude toward the improvements in secondary education suggested by Trump than do students at the school with the most culturally different students.

Other Statistical Tests

In an attempt to discover whether responses to the set of related items in the questionnaire (1-14--1-21 and 2-6--2-13) had a significant effect on the overall responses to the survey instrument, each of the four variables has been analyzed within four subsections of the questionnaire. The omitted items required the student to indicate how much time he felt he should spend in high school studying a given subject area. The researcher felt that strong student reaction related to certain subject areas might have skewed the results on the total survey instrument. Therefore, by omitting those items, the remainder of the questionnaire could be analyzed to see if the hypotheses were

supported on the various subsections of the test. By omitting items 1-14--1-21 and 2-6--2-13, the following subsections can be identified: (1) items 1-1--1-13; (2) items 1-22--1-25; (3) items 2-1--2-5; (4) items 2-14--2-24. The comparison of frequencies for each of the variables within each subsection included the use of the Chi-square test to indicate the significance of the differences found. A summary of these findings is contained in Table 2. Only on of the sixteen comparisons was not found to be significant; the other fifteen comparisons supported the findings on the total instrument.

TABLE 2

COMPARISON OF CHI-SQUARE VALUES

DERIVED FROM SUBSECTIONS OF THE SURVCEY INSTRUMENT

Variable	Items 1-1--1-13	Items 1-22--1-25	Items 2-1--2-5	Items 2-14--2-24	Total Test
Sex	30.479***	11.282*	43.642***	30.807***	91.556**
Grade level	251.252***	40.105**	96.325***	123.159***	561.236**
Ability level	74.970***	29.567**	20.580*	83.783***	200.851**
School	64.712***	20.532*	15.389 (NS)	58.197***	205.496**

***Significant at the .001 level
**Significant at the .01 level
*Significant at the .05 level

Conclusions

In addition to indicating general support for the Trump recommendations included in the study, the findings led to the following conclusions:

(1) girls had a more favorable perception of the selected innovations than boys; (2) high school seniors and graduates expressed more favorable perceptions of the selected innovations than did freshmen and sophomores in high school; (3) students of above average intellectual ability indicated a more positive reaction to the selected innovations than below average students; (4) students at the school with the least number of culturally different students reported a more favorable response to the selected innovations than the students attending the hgh school with the most culturally different students.

It is the overall support by students and graduates for the elements of the Trump plan included in the study which they reader should remember. Otherwise, he might mistakenly conclude that these educational innovations would only succeed with senior girls of above average intellectual ability in a high school located in an area with few culturally different students.

Recommendations for Further Research

The following comprise recommendations for further research: (1) The further investigation of the research hypothesis using samples of students from all levels of society; (2) the longitudinal study of student responses to the survey instrument to note which factors effect change in these perceptions, and (3) the replication of the study using larger samples in other parts of the country, in schools with 75-95% of their students classified as culturally different, and at the intermediate and junior high schools.

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